



Australian Government

Department of Health and Aged Care
Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

Gene Technology Ethics and Community Consultative Committee Meeting of 22 November 2022 Communiqué

This Communiqué covers matters considered at the 17th meeting of the Gene Technology Ethics and Community Consultative Committee (22 November 2022)

Background

The Gene Technology Ethics and Community Consultative Committee (GTECCC) is a statutory advisory committee established under the *Gene Technology Act 2000* to provide advice on the request of the Gene Technology Regulator (Regulator) or the Gene Technology Ministers' Meeting, on issues of ethical or community concern relating to gene technology.

The purpose of this Communiqué is to provide Committee resolutions and a brief overview of the key matters considered by GTECCC at its 17th meeting, held in Canberra on 22 November 2022.

GTECCC Work Plan

Guiding principles for communication on gene technology

The GTECCC working group established to undertake a literature review to inform development of guiding principles for communication on gene technology presented their final report to the committee. GTECCC thanked the working group for their efforts in finalising this work.

The Committee agreed that the literature review report marked the completion of phase one of the guiding principles project and discussed the possible next phase of the project. GTECCC suggested that the guiding principles should serve to highlight the competent, caring work the Regulator does for the community in line with the object of the *Gene Technology Act 2000*. GTECCC discussed science communication efforts more generally and the importance of considering the objective of any communication.

Other Items for Discussion/Advice

Sustainable funding models

GTECCC was presented information on how the OGTR is contributing to investigations into sustainable funding models. GTECCC noted that OGTR has been fully government funded since the start of the scheme. Members discussed the gene technology sector and the various models for cost-recovery in use by other agencies.

Community attitudes surveys

GTECCC discussed the trends observed in community attitudes towards biotechnology and gene technology over time, as seen in the surveys of community attitudes to gene technology in Australia commissioned by the OGTR biennially since 2015.

The Committee was asked to consider the frequency of undertaking these surveys. GTECCC advised that they remain biennial, particularly at this time in order to explore the influences of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes.

Regulatory culture and posture

GTECCC was given an overview of a regulatory culture project initiated to better understand and influence regulatory culture in the OGTR context. GTECCC noted the potential difficulty of aligning an approach to regulatory culture with a shifting mandate as legislative reforms progress.

Safe-by-Design and Responsible Research and Innovation in modern biotechnology

OGTR provided members with an overview of the concepts of 'Safe-by-Design' (SbD) and 'Responsible Research and Innovation' (RRI) and their application to modern biotechnology. GTECCC discussed the concepts more broadly and noted linkages to the Regulator's functions and to OGTR's risk assessments.

Legislative reforms progress

GTECCC discussed OGTR's reform roadmap and potential changes to regulatory powers.

Reports

GTECCC received reports from the Regulator and the cross-member with the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee (GTTAC) on recent activities of the OGTR and GTTAC, respectively, since the last meeting.

**For all inquiries, please call the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator on
1800 181 030 (free-call) or email ogtr@health.gov.au**